

THE METHOD OF INDIAN LEXICOGRAPHICAL PRESENTATION: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE AMARAKOŚA

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I. Introduction

Among the devices of meaning apprehension,¹ dictionary plays a pivot role. The earliest beginnings of lexicographical works in Sanskrit, are the *Nighaṅṭus*. The *Nirukta* of Yāska is a commentary on *Nighaṅṭus*. This can be the origin of the later lexicographical works.

However, the difference between *Nighaṅṭus* and later lexicographies is: the former contained not only nominal forms but also verbal ones, whereas the later works restricted themselves to the nominal forms and the indeclinables. Further, *Nighaṅṭus* confined to the Vedas but later *kośas* 'dictionaries' dealt with the words in the entire range of the classical literature. Moreover, structurally, *Nighaṅṭus* were in prose form but later dictionaries were composed mostly in verses.

With regard to the later lexicographical works, there is an enumeration of twenty-six prominent lexicons. Among them the *Amarakośa* is called *Sanātana*² 'eternal.' The reason behind such saying is that the *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana* or *Amarakośa* by Amarasimha is the most celebrated and authoritative ancient lexicon in Sanskrit language. This is considered by the scholars as concise, comprehensive and indisputably the most memorized traditional dictionary in the world. The comparison of it is often made with the Concise Oxford Dictionary in English. The strongest evidence of its popularity is, however, that at least eighty commentaries more than on any other piece of Indian literature, have been handed down to us.³

The success behind such popularity lies in its technique of presentation. With regard to his technique, scholars believe that the

¹ Different ways of meaning apprehension are mentioned in the following *kārikā*: *śaktigrahaṇ vyākaraṇopamānakośāptavākyād vyavahārataśca / vākyasya śeṣād vivṛter vadanti sānidhyataḥ siddhapadasya vṛddhāḥ // Tattvacintāmaṇirahasya*, p. 481 (for this source, see K.Kunjunni Raja [1977: 26, fn.1]) and *Nyāyasiddhāntamuktāvalī*, p. 296.

² vide *Amarakośa*, Bombay Sanskrit Series, Bombay, 1886, Introduction, p. 1 (quoted in *Amarakośa*, edited by Ramanathan [1971: xv])

³ vide Vogel [1979: 313-14].

Amarakośa must have influenced P.M. Roget in preparing his world famous Thesaurus, because Roget, in the Introduction to his book remembers Amarasimha's work as the earliest attempt to construct a systematic arrangement of ideas with a view to their expression.⁴ Another proof of its excellency in methodology is, much ago, towards the end of 12th Century, the famous lexical work in Pāli called *Abhidhānappadīpikā* was written by Moggalana in the same model.⁵

The lexicographical works in Sanskrit in general are divided into three groups i.e. synonymous, homonymous and dealing with genders. But they often overlap each other and make it difficult to distinguish one from another. The synonymic dictionaries are systematic catalogue of words with one and the same meaning; they are grouped subjectwise and often have the character of encyclopaedias. The homonymic dictionaries register words with more than one meaning (*anekārtha, nānārtha*). A neat and proper discrimination of both categories is not found always practicable since many synonymic lexica include a homonymic section or chapter as well. The *Amarakośa* is basically a synonymic dictionary whose articles are grouped subjectwise. But at the end a homonymous portion is also arranged. It also provides rules for determining genders. Therefore, it is in a way a complete *kośa* 'lexicon' giving all the phases: synonyms, homonyms and genders.

The methods or principles followed therein every lexicon are generally given by the lexicographer in the preface to his book. Amara in the beginning of his book, has laid down certain criteria applied in acquiring this notable lexicon and methods followed by him, and to be followed by the readers. The principles provided by Amarasimha are often sidetracked by the readers. The critics also have not discussed them in detail. Hence, the present paper aims at exploring and discussing these principles in detail.

II. Methods of the presentation of words in the *Amarakośa*

First of all, he mentions three scientific criteria in selecting his method of presentation and selection of words. They are as follows.

A) *samāhṛtyānyatantrāṇi* 'after compilation of different earlier techniques'

⁴ vide Roget [1962: xxxv, fn.1] (also quoted in Ramanathan [1971: xxiii]).

⁵ For the reference, vide Vogel [1979: 313, fn.43].

Amara here refers to earlier lexicographical works of Vyādi, Vararuci etc. and the techniques followed therein.⁶ All the earlier works have been taken into consideration while preparing this present work.

B) *saṁkṣiptaiḥ* 'precisely' or 'comprehensively'

This principle is one of the most prominent principles followed in every scientific discipline. Here, author's attempt is made towards selection of words suitable to a concise dictionary. By adopting this principle, Amara achieves brevity or economy⁷ of words in the sense that he drops a large number of words which were out of currency by that time.

C) *pratisaṁskṛtaiḥ* 'with improved or updated methods of enumeration'

In this stage, the author has tried to set the words in a proper order, so that the non-essentials are left out and arrangement is an improvement over the existing system of presentation. After these three criteria of scanning, the author speaks of the general enumerative method in the following manner.

D) *vargaiḥ* 'classified into chapters'

The word-enumeration is classified according to subjects to facilitate someone to look into the desired word in its proper section.⁸ Further, the author speaks of his approach towards the lexicon as follows.

E) *saṁpūrṇam* 'complete'

Already it has been stated⁹ that it is a complete dictionary dealing with noun and gender both. Most of the earlier lexicons were dealing either with nouns or genders but here, the author deals with both of these. Henceforth, the author, in the following lines, describes the way to determine genders of words. They are as follows.

i) *prāyaśaḥ rūpabhedena* 'genders are determined mostly from the morphological appearances of nouns'

For example, *lakṣmī padmālayā padmā*¹⁰ etc. will indicate that the nouns are in feminine; *pinakaḥ, indraḥ* etc. will indicate masculine and *ajagavam, triviṣṭapām* etc. will indicate neuter.

⁶ *Rāmāśramī*, p. 2.

⁷ His principle of economy of words is also clear elsewhere at the end of 2nd *kāṇḍa* (in '*uktā bhūriprayogavāt*' etc.).

⁸ There are different theories of word arrangement in a dictionary, vide Upadhyaya [1969: 320-21].

⁹ In the Introduction of the present article.

¹⁰ *Amarakośa* [B] I. I. 28.

ii) *kuṭracit sāhacaryāt*¹¹ 'in some places, from the juxtaposition of another word'

When there is no morphological indication, in such a case one can understand gender of a word from the association of other famous word. For instance, the word *aśvayuk* is known as feminine in association with the word *aśvinī*,¹² the word *bhānu* is known as masculine in association with the word *karah*,¹³ and the word *vijat* is known as neuter in association with *viṣṇupadam*.¹⁴

iii) *kvacit tad viśeṣavidheḥ* 'sometimes through direct statements'

Sometimes, special mentions of genders are made with reference to some words. For example, in *bherī strī dundubhiḥ pumān, roci śocir ubhe klībe*¹⁵ the word *bherī* is in feminine, the word *dundubhi* is used in masculine and the words *roci* and *śoci* both are neuter. After certain method of apprehension and prescriptions of gender, the author makes some provisions and prohibitions with regard to genders as follows.

iv) *bhinnaliṅgānām bhedākhyānāya na dvandvaḥ na ekaśeṣaḥ (kṛtaḥ)*.

To maintain the generic difference, no *dvandva* and *ekaśeṣa* compounds are formulated of the words having different genders. It means *dvandvas* and *ekaśeṣas* are formed only of the words having same gender.

v) *anuktānām kramādṛte saṁkaraḥ na kṛtaḥ*.

No confusion is made with regard to genders of the words neither stated by the aforesaid ways of gender-enumeration nor of those very much in their proper contexts. For example, the entities of devine origin called *devayonis* are mentioned together without proper arrangement of genders because they are stated as per they are understood in the tradition. The systematic arrangement of genders here means: without intervening in each

11 While formulating this and the above technique as well it is quite possible that the following *kārikās* from the *Vākyapadīya* (VP) were before the author; or at least the contents were known to him.

*vākyāt prakaraṇād arthād aucityād deśakālataḥ /
śabdārthāḥ pravibhajante na rūpād eva kevalāt // VP, 2.314.
samsargo viprayogaś ca sāhacaryaṃ virodhitā /
arthaḥ prakaraṇaṃ liṅgaṃ śabdasyānyasya saṁnidhiḥ // VP, 2.315.
sāmartyam aucitī deśaḥ kālo vyaktiḥ svarādayaḥ /
śabdārthasyānavacchede viśeṣasmṛtihetavaḥ // VP, 2.316.*

However, the date of Amarasimha whether later or earlier to Bharṭṥhari is open to the scholars.

12 *Amarakośa* [B] I.3.21.

13 *Ibid.* I.3.33.

14 *Ibid.* I.2.2.

15 vide *Rāmāśramī* on *Amarakośa* 1.1.3.

other's domain or periphery. For instance, in case of the statements of synonyms of *stuti* 'prayer' the author has read them as : *stavaḥ stotraṁ stutir nutiḥ*.¹⁶ Had it been mentioned by the author as '*stutiḥ stotraṁ stavo nutiḥ*, he would have violated his own rule and it would have been a methodical error. After stating the above provisions for genders, the author proceeds to solve the problem of determining genders of *bahuliṅgakas* 'words having more than one gender' as follows.

vi) *trilingyām triṣu iti*

vii) *mīthune dvayor iti*

viii) *śeṣārtham niśidhaliṅgam (prayuktam)*

When a noun used in all the three genders is to be indicated then the word *triṣu* is used; if it is in masculine and feminine both then the word *dvयोḥ*¹⁷ is used. But what about the words used in 'masculine and neuter' as well as 'neuter and feminine'? The problem is intelligibly solved by the author by adopting the rule of negation or prohibition, so that the rest would be understood by *pariśeṣanyāya*. He prohibits one among the three and achieves brevity¹⁸ in instruction.

F) The last principle i.e. *tvantāthādi*¹⁹ *na pūrvabhāk* adopted by the author, makes the lexicon a lucid study or enumeration. It separates metrical units into subjectwise groups and employs the particles 'tu' and 'atha' as punctuation marks when needed. They sometimes play a great role as connectives, interpretatives etc.

III. Conclusion

Thus, Amara has proved his excellency in methodical presentation of a lexicon. No doubt, it has surpassed all earlier methods of lexicographical presentations. But, in later times, it has faced serious criticism by the critics.²⁰ Nevertheless, the rationale of the lexicon is so that

¹⁶ *Amarakośa* [B] I.6.11.

¹⁷ vide *Rāmāśramī* on *Amarakośa* 1.1.5: '*dvyoḥ iti dviśabdaprayogopalakṣaṇam*.'

¹⁸ It is accepted by different disciplines as a technique of expression. The principle is called *lāghava* 'brevity of expression' as oppose to *gaurava* 'prolixity.' For example, Patañjali while stating the purpose of *vyākaraṇa* mentions *vyākaraṇa* as the shortest way of knowing language: *raṅśohāgamalaghvasandehāḥ prayojanam*. Further, the importance of the technique is emphasized in the *Paribhāṣenduśekhara* (133): *ekamātrālaghavena putrotsavaṇṇ manyante vaiyākaraṇāḥ* 'a great joy is felt by the grammarians if a brevity of expression could be shorter even with half a mora.'

¹⁹ Here the *Rāmāśramī* comments: '*vastutastu atra padapūrapāya cakārādyeva pathitum yuktam*.' But, as against this, we find such particles sometimes play a great role.

²⁰ Śrīharṣa through a short work called *Amarakhaṇḍana* assails Amara's lexicon as 'poor in words, variant forms and gender indications' (Eng. tr. as given by Vogel [1979: 318]).

such criticism has also been challenged by the followers²¹ of Amara. It is therefore, the lexicon validly stands as the most authentic one in the tradition and mostly quoted by the authors. Although, in the light of the methods of presentation of dictionaries available to present day, we can find out some deficiencies in this traditional way of presentation yet the methodology followed here has stood as the touch-stone through the ages on which revisions are contemplated.

The classification of the words into different categories; sections and sub-sections etc. may help us preparing different charts for the programming in computer.

However, on the basis of his own methodology, there are a few problems which could be pointed out here. They are as follows: (i) the rule for the line of demarkation (*tvantāthādi*) put by the author is flexible and (ii) the key explanatory word for a group of synonyms is not mentioned. For the above two problems, perhaps, it is left out to be explained by the commentaries. The other problem is: the second and third *kāṇḍas* have not been paid attention with more systematic and detailed manner, which could have been as in case of the first *kāṇḍa*.

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²¹ Kṛṣṇasūri in his work *Amaramaṇḍana* defends the faults of Amara's work shown by Śrīharṣa.

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